THE DIACONATE AS ECUMENICAL OPPORTUNITY

The Hanover Report
of the
Anglican-Lutheran
International Commission

for the Anglican Consultative Council and the Lutheran World Federation

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Tom Dorris, Deacon

in memoriam

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FOREWORD

by the Co-Chairmen

Lutherans and Anglicans, like Christians of many other traditions, have been engaged during recent decades in much debate about the nature of ministry - both the ministry of the whole people of God and that of specific ordained ministers. This debate was intensified by the publication in 1982 of the Lima document *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM), which intentionally raised many fundamental issues of ecclesiology, ministry and ordination.

A new approach was pioneered by the Anglican-Lutheran International Commission (ALIC) in the Niagara Report (1987), which tackled the question of episcopé, or pastoral oversight, from the perspective of the church's mission. This produced a breakthrough in Anglican-Lutheran understanding which has already borne fruit in the proposed *Concordat of Agreement* (1991) in the USA and the *Porvoo Common Statement* (1992) between the British and Irish Anglican Churches and the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Churches.

ALIC believed that the next logical step would be to undertake a fresh joint study of the *diaconate*, especially since the threefold ordering of the ordained ministry had long been a central issue in Anglican-Lutheran dialogue. The atmosphere of openness and growing trust between us has given us the confidence to work together on this question, where perplexities and real differences are evident, yet without their being church-dividing. Our desire has been to learn from each whatever could be useful for the common mission we share, and to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort.

From the outset of this project we were aware that our theological reflection needed to be rooted in the experience and concerns of those who actually exercise various diaconal ministries. We record our gratitude to the consultants' names in Appendix 1, to whose evidence and convictions we paid serious attention.

We were equally aware that some churches do not have an ordained ministry distinct from that of the presbyter/pastor. The subject-matter of this report is, nevertheless, directly relevant where, in response to specific needs, forms of ministry have sprung up which could be better recognized and utilized if seen in the context of diaconal ministry. Not only those people engaged in such work, but those whom they serve and with whom they co-operate, can be helped to value this diaconal ministry more highly.

Our aim is to offer a theological rationale which follows a clear line of argument: from Christ and the Spirit, through the ministry of the whole people of God (including ordained ministry) to an understanding of the diaconate. The latter part of this study focuses on the role of the ordained deacon in particular, as distinct

from the broader understanding of *diaconia*.

We desire to know far more than we have yet discovered about the impressive range of diaconal ministries, and are sorry that our limited resources did not permit us to make a wider factual survey. We have been glad to discover that a number of working parties and research projects on this theme are already under way in various churches throughout the world. This reinforces our conviction that a particular ecumenical opportunity lies in developing the diaconate, and we indicate in Appendix 3 the main factual points on which we would welcome information from church leaders and the chairpersons of diaconal associations and communities.

We recommend this *Hanover Report* to our parent bodies, the Anglican Consultative Council and the Lutheran World Federation, and through them to their member churches throughout the world. We hope that it will serve as a catalyst for both joint study and joint action. We also dare to believe that it may have significance beyond these two world communions, and ask our ecumenical partners to study it in the context of the search for closer visible unity and of common service to God's world.

By common consent the members of ALIC dedicate this report to the memory of the late Deacon Tom Dorris of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. For many years Tom exercised a skilled ministry in the Communications Unit of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, reporting and interpreting church affairs to the media. He was a keen advocate of a restored diaconate, and carefully collated the responses of all churches to the paragraphs in the Lima document on this subject. Not long after moving to new work with the Life and Peace Institute in Sweden he was tragically killed in a car accident in 1994. We hope that this report will further the concerns to which he dedicated his life.

We wish to express our particular thanks to those who played a key role in drafting and editing this report: Professor Michael Root (Strasbourg, France), the Very Revd William Petersen (Rochester, NY, USA) and the Revd Dr Walter Bouman (Columbus, Ohio, USA). We also pay a special tribute to our co-secretaries, the Revd Dr Eugene Brand and the Revd Dr Donald Anderson; for each of them the publication of this book coincides with their retirement from a long and distinguished period of ecumenical service at the international level.

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I INTRODUCTION

1. The diaconate, an institution of great importance in the early church, is again coming to life in the church as a ministry and office closely related to central aspects of the church's identity: service, outreach, humility, concern for human needs. This reinvigoration of the diaconate has various roots: liturgical revival, a livelier sense of the church's mission in the world, and a renewed perception of rightful diversity in the church's ministries. These sources have together shaped the many forms of diaconate and diaconal ministry current today or under consideration in our churches.

2. No ecumenical consensus has yet emerged on the nature and forms of the diaconate and diaconal ministry. Not only have different churches made different decisions about the diaconate, but debates continue within the churches about such fundamental questions as whether the diaconate is appropriately an ordained or lay ministry and whether those who intend to be ordained priest or pastor should first be ordained to the diaconate (the so-called "transitional diaconate"). The diaconate and diaconal ministries are still in flux in many churches. New forms of diaconate have been recently introduced in some churches, with varying degrees of acceptance, and are under study in other churches. While the nature of the diaconate is not an issue which lies at the centre of the faith, the restoration and reinvigoration of the diaconate affects the structure of the whole church's ministry. It not only reshapes mission, but directly touches the vocational lives of persons engaged in ministry. The debate over the diaconate thus has highly practical implications.

3. Transition and flux in the diaconate have been heightened by recent exegetical work on the meaning of the word *diakonia* in the New Testament and early church. Earlier work had argued that waiting at table and service of a humble sort was the term's paradigmatic sense. *Diakonia* as a term for Christian ministry was thus taken to refer especially to a character of humble service that should be typical of all ministry in the name of Christ.

4. More recent exegetical work, especially by John Collins in his *Diakonia: Reinterpreting the Ancient Sources*, (Oxford: 1990) has called this earlier consensus into doubt. In the world in which the early church lived, *diakonia* seems to have referred to the service of a "go-between" or agent who carries out activities for another. In the letters of Paul, it also appears that *diakonia* is used to describe Paul and some of his associates as the "go-between" who carries the gospel from God or Christ to those who are to hear the message of salvation. *Diakonia* seems more concerned with apostleship than with our present understanding of the diaconate. Though scholars continue to debate, their findings cannot be ignored and

have played an important part in this study.

5. Institutional and conceptual change in relation to the diaconate and diaconal ministry should be grasped as an opportunity to explore new forms of mission. This study has been especially concerned to consider the diaconate and diaconal ministry as an ecumenical opportunity, an opportunity for common mission among the churches. Ecumenical progress must not remain a matter of theological discussions or formal agreements, but needs to reach into and be nourished by common life and mission. In moving from its earlier study of episcopé (*The Niagara Report - Report of the Anglican-Lutheran Consultation on Episcope 1987*) to its present study of the diaconate, the Anglican-Lutheran International Commission (ALIC) has not moved from issues of primary ecumenical importance to secondary issues, but rather has moved deeper into the heart of the one church's mission. In addition, while this study was carried out by a bilateral commission, observers from other ecclesial traditions were involved in the commission's preliminary work and ALIC hopes that the study's results will be relevant well beyond the two traditions.

6. Within both the Anglican and Lutheran communions, the nature of the diaconate and the possibilities of its renewal have been much discussed in recent years. A study at the international level was requested by the 1988 Lambeth Conference and by a Lutheran World Federation (LWF) consultation on ministry held in 1992 in Cartigny, Switzerland. In response to these requests, the following study was proposed by ALIC at its meeting in Johannesburg in February 1993 and approved by the Standing Committee of the Anglican Consultative Council and Primates' Meeting in March 1994 and by the Council of the LWF in June 1994. Background papers were commissioned for a preparatory consultation in April 1995 in West Wickham, Kent, England. This consultation produced the outline of a statement on the diaconate. On the basis of the papers and outline from the earlier consultation and with the participation of four expert consultants, ALIC developed the following text at their meeting at Kloster Wennigsen, near Hanover, Germany, in October 1995. The West Wickham papers are available from the Anglican Communion Office in London.

7. As *The Niagara Report* did with episcopé, this study seeks to place the diaconate in the context of a more comprehensive vision of the mission of God in the world. It thus begins with a consideration of Christ and the Holy Spirit as the agents who always drive the church's ministry. The church is then discussed as the sign and instrument of the work of Christ and the Spirit. The church's mission and ministry then form the context for the discussion of the diaconate and diaconal ministry in the remainder of the text.

II THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THE DIACONATE AND DIACONAL MINISTRY

A. CHRIST, KINGDOM, AND SPIRIT

8. Faithful diaconal ministry has been done and is being carried out under a great variety of circumstances and forms by the church and its members. In this document the Anglican- Lutheran International Commission uses a theological model which it believes is especially suitable for locating diaconal ministry within the mission and ministry of the church as a whole. The church has both its historical and its theological basis in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection of Jesus is the eschatological event (1 Cor 10:11) which discloses the crucified one as "both Lord and Messiah" (Acts 2:36); which identifies him as the one who determines the ultimate destiny of the universe (1 Cor 15:24-28); and which discloses that he is "the head over all things for the church" (Eph 1:22). He is eschatological Lord because "death no longer has dominion over him" (Rom 6:9). All powers of the "old age" are dominated by death and are characterized by an unrelenting drive for self-preservation, at whatever cost to others. But if Jesus Christ has the last word, then he confers the freedom for self-offering on behalf of the world in the conviction that there is more to do with life than to preserve it (Mt 16:24-26 and parallels; cf. *The Niagara Report*, 22-23).

9. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the lens through which the church perceives Jesus' own mission and ministry, and retells the story. The historical mission of Jesus was to announce the good news of the reign of God in proclamation and parables, to embody the reign of God in signs and actions, and to be the historical fulfilment of the promised final victory of the reign of God through his death and resurrection. (Mk 1:14-15; Lk 17:21-22; Mt 11:2-6; Lk 11:20). In a slave's death (Phil 2:6-8) on the cross he endured the consequence of his own diaconal ministry. For Jesus was crucified because his messianic mission was to be God's saving embrace of all Israel and of all the world. On the cross Jesus was obedient to the sending and mission of the Father (Mk 14:32-37) in the power of the Holy Spirit (Mk 1:9-11). Jesus was sent by the Father to reconcile the whole creation to God (2 Cor 5:17-19).

10. In Christ the victory of the reign of God over the powers of death and sin has begun. The leadership ministry of Christ is therefore not like leadership in the world of death and sin (Mk 10:41-45). It has a character and quality determined by Christ's way of being in and for the world, in the service of his Father. Christ is determinative for the ministry and ministries of the church. He is the basis for the *leitourgia*, the worship, of the church, for he offers and gives himself in free

obedience (Heb 9:14; Gal 2:20; 1 Cor 11:23- 26; Jn 12:20-33, etc.). He is the basis for the *martyria*, the witness, of the church, for he is the foundational witness to the everlasting love of the triune God (Jn 3:16; Rom 5:8). As the incarnate Word sent by the Father, Jesus is the basis for the church's *diakonia*, the freedom to announce and act out God's eschatological salvation (Rom 15:8). Christ is *diakonos*, servant, as the agent and image of the one who sent him, acting and forgiving with his Father's own power, mediating the Father's will to the world. Being *diakonos* does not mean that the roles of leader and servant are reversed or abolished, but rather that those who lead and rule do so as servants, that is, as agents of Christ's salvation (Lk 22:27).

11. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is the sign promised by Christ that the eschatological reign of God has come. At every point the presence and power of the Holy Spirit testifies that the final act of history has occurred in Jesus. The Holy Spirit came upon Mary in the conception of Jesus (Mt 2:18-20; Lk 1:35). The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus at his baptismal commissioning (Mk 1:10 and parallels). The Holy Spirit was promised as Christ's eschatological gift to his disciples (Acts 1:8; Jn 14:15-17, etc.).

12. Thus the outcome of the mission and ministry of Christ is nothing less than a new creation. The entire universe is encompassed by the love and care, the redeeming commitment and creative salvation of the Holy Trinity.

B. THE CHURCH

13. The church is both designated and called to be the effective sign and instrument of the reign of God. The eschatological reign of God, inaugurated by and inseparable from Jesus Christ, is the goal and promise of God in history. The reign of God is being served wherever institutions, communities, movements, and individuals contribute to peace with justice, to compassion for the suffering, to preservation and care of the creation, and to admonition and conversion of sinners.

14. The church is called and admonished to reflect in its being and worship, its life and ministry, what God has done and is doing (Eph 4:1-6; Rom 12; Col 3:1-4,1; *The Niagara Report*, 24). The pattern of apostolic writing in Ephesians, for example, is that the church is exhorted and admonished on the basis of what God has done. In Christ the reign of God has already come. That means, among other things, that God has already broken down the wall of hostility between Jew and Gentile, male and female, slave and free (Gal 3:28; Eph 2:11-22).

15. The church is called to witness to the reign of God. In this witness, the

church confesses that Jesus is the Christ, even beyond the church where he is not recognized as such. One aspect of the church's witness to the reign of God is a critical recognition of where the reign of God is being served. The church is called to cooperate in humility with institutions, communities, movements, and individuals contributing to the vision of the reign of God. The church is called to identify, warn against, and oppose the powers of death and sin, without counting the cost.

16. The church is created by the Holy Spirit. On the basis of the promise of Christ (Jn 14:15-17, etc.) the community of disciples experienced the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4; Jn 20:22- 23). Acts 2:17 uses an eschatological formula, "in the last days", to introduce the vision of the prophet Joel. The Holy Spirit is now the dynamic of the entire community, young and old, women and men, and not just the dynamic of charismatic individuals. The Holy Spirit is the *arrabon*, the "down payment" on God's final future (Eph 1:14; 2 Cor 1:22 and 5:5). As "down payment" the Holy Spirit empowers and calls the church to live in anticipation of the consummation of the reign of God. The evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence is behaviour determined by being "in Christ" (Gal 5:22-26). Jesus' disciples are promised the Holy Spirit as the answer to their prayer (Lk 11:13). The church is therefore called to receive the prayer which Jesus taught it to pray (Lk 11:1-4) as the way Jesus shares with the church his own mission and ministry. The church prays for the Holy Spirit when it asks that God's name be holy, that God's reign come, that it eat the messianic bread of the future, and that it anticipate God's final forgiveness by forgiving all who sin against it.

17. The church is called to trust God's promise that the Holy Spirit will be given. The church is called to be open to the Holy Spirit, to receive the gift and the gifts of the Spirit, to recognize and seize the opportunities to serve the reign of God, and to accept with thanksgiving the ministries which serve the reign of God.

18. The church becomes visible in its gathering as a eucharistic assembly. When the church gathers for "the Lord's Supper" (1 Cor 11:19), it becomes especially visible "as a church" (1 Cor 11:18). In Corinth it was evident that some of the members were not caring for other members in that meal which anticipates the consummation of the reign of God when God will be "all in all" (1 Cor 15:28). Just so, the church was not diaconal, was not proclaiming the Lord's self-offering for the world "until he comes" (1 Cor 11:26). It is precisely in the eucharistic celebration that the eschatological consummation of the reign of God is anticipated (BEM, Eucharist, 21).

19. The eucharistic celebration involves five actions: (1) The gathering of the baptized in one place as the *koinonia* of Christ with his people and as the *koinonia* of the people in Christ (Acts 2:42, 46; 1 Cor 10:16-17); (2) attention to the Word of God; (3) the offering, in which the baptized offer themselves through prayer and gifts for service to the reign of God; (4) the meal of the presence of the eschatological Christ which anticipates the messianic banquet; (5) The sending of the baptized into their daily mission and ministry.

20. The eucharistic assembly as *koinonia* participates in and manifests the *leitourgia*, *martyria*, and *diakonia* of the Christ who is present to it and through it. It is in the eucharistic assembly that the church receives its identity (body of Christ) and its mission (to be offered for one another and for the world; 1 Cor 10:16-17; 1 Cor 11:17-26). In gathering, Word, prayer, meal, and sending the church is called and embraced by Christ for his mission and ministry in the world.

C. DIACONAL MINISTRY

21. The liturgy provides the context for understanding the church's diaconal ministry. The celebration of the eucharist (see above, 18) has, in significant ways, shaped the governing structures of the church. In the Lutheran tradition, bishops (Augsburg Confession XXVIII) and ordained ministers in general (Augsburg Confession V) are defined by their connection with Word and sacrament. In the Anglican tradition, bishops, priests, and deacons are ordained into ministries that have to do with Word and sacrament. Both of these traditions reflect the vision and practice which comes to expression in ancient Christian documents (e.g., the *Apology* of Justin Martyr, the *Didache*, the *Apostolic Constitution* of Hippolytus).

22. The celebration of the eucharist is a paradigm for the interrelationship of various ministries in the church. It is, among other things, a kind of "dress rehearsal" for life.

23. The liturgy is the work of the whole people of God. Ministry is, first, ministry of the church as a whole. The whole community is a priestly people (1 Pet 2:9). Hebrews, in one passage, brings together the ministry of Christ and the interrelated ministries of *leitourgia*, *martyria*, and *diakonia* on the part of the people: "Therefore Jesus also suffered outside the city gate in order to sanctify the people by his own blood. Let us then go to him outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God"

(Heb 13:12-16).

24. The ministry of the whole people of God requires the ministries of individuals. Through baptism persons are initiated into the ministry of the whole church. Incumbent upon all the baptized is the exercise of *leitourgia*, *martyria*, and *diakonia*. However, baptism itself does not confer office in the church. "What is the common property of all, no individual may arrogate to himself, unless he is called" (*Luther's Works*, WA 6:566; American Edition 36:116). Office must be given by the church. Within the liturgy there is a variety of specific tasks to be performed; these tasks have traditionally been correlated with distinct roles in the liturgical celebration, e.g., that of presider and deacon, which have a symbolic function.

25. There are some offices in the church which enact and bring into focus central aspects of the mission of the entire church and also form the identity of the person involved. This description applies particularly to ordained ministries. Such ministries involve an appointment or call from the church and a rite which includes prayer and the laying on of hands. In the church's rite, God is active, giving the gifts needed for ministry. Through *leitourgia*, *martyria*, and *diakonia* persons designated as God's gifts to the church become symbols of Christ and his church (BEM, Ministry, 12,15).

26. A close relationship exists between liturgical celebration and diaconal ministry. The baptized have been given their calling and ministry by virtue of their baptism. That calling is renewed and reshaped by the liturgical celebration of the eucharist. The diaconal ministry of the laity receives encouragement and, where appropriate, leadership from the deacons of the church.

27. The ministry of deacons was traditionally, and in some places is at present, expressed within the liturgical celebration of the gathered eucharistic assembly by assigning elements of the rite to the deacon: reading the gospel, leading the intercessions of the people, receiving the gifts of the people and "setting the table" for the meal, serving the eucharistic meal, sending the people from the eucharistic assembly into the world, administering the ceremonial. In the early church the social service carried on by deacons seems to have been rooted in the liturgical celebration (see the *Apology* of Justin Martyr).

28. The social services so central to the diaconal communities and ministries founded in the 19th century continue to be a vital aspect at the church's witness and ministry. These services were rooted in a rich worship and community life. The integration of worship and service remains a concern for the various diaconal ministries of the church.

III DIVERSITY AND COMMONALITY OF PRESENT FORMS OF DIACONAL MINISTRY

A. DIVERSITY AND UNITY

29. In some traditions and congregations, recent liturgical renewal has included a revival of the specific liturgical role of the deacon (cf. 27). In other traditions, various members at the laity have assumed one or more of these ritual elements. Representatives of the laity served to encourage all the laity in their daily ministries. The revival of the deacon's specific liturgical role need not exclude liturgical expressions of lay ministry. It should give appropriate leadership to the diaconal dimension and character of the daily ministry of all the baptized.

30. The diaconate and other diaconal ministries have taken highly diverse forms in the Lutheran and Anglican communions. Not only have the differences existed between the two traditions, but diaconal ministries within each tradition have been so multiform that they are difficult to categorize. Some generalizations can, however, be made about diaconal ministry in each tradition.

31. The Anglican tradition has preserved an ordained diaconate, whether transitional or permanent, and "deacon" in an Anglican context usually refers to someone in this office. But Anglican churches also have deaconesses and other especially designated persons who carry out diaconal ministry (e.g., licensed lay workers, communities of religious).

32. At the time of the Reformation, Lutheran churches did not preserve an ordained diaconate within a threefold ordering of ministry. "Deacon" in most Lutheran traditions refers to a person consecrated or commissioned to a ministry focused on parish work or social service, but not ordained, i.e., their ministry has not generally been seen as a form of the single ordained ministry, usually understood by Lutherans to be the office of Word and sacrament. Some deacons or diaconal ministers have liturgical roles. Deaconesses are known in many countries, many churches have a variety of diaconal ministries, and the ordained diaconate has been revived in some Lutheran churches.

33. The diversity of diaconal ministries in the Anglican and Lutheran churches is not a difference that breaks or blocks communion between our churches. The possibility of diversity in the diaconate and diaconal ministries has been affirmed in Anglican-Lutheran dialogues since their beginnings in 1909 (Anglican Communion - Church of Sweden).

34. To be ecumenically fruitful, diversity must be open to cooperation and mutual enrichment. Our traditions have influenced each other in diaconal ministry

in the past. The Anglican tradition has held up the model of an ordained diaconate for all churches shaped by the Reformation of the sixteenth century. The deaconess movement that arose in nineteenth century German Lutheranism found an echo in the founding of similar communities in some Anglican churches.

35. Diversity is always to be seen against the background of the one church of Jesus Christ, to which both Anglicans and Lutherans belong. On the one hand, diversity should thus be recognizably rooted in a shared set of beliefs and commitments about the mission and ministry of the church (see above, section II). Unity must not exclude diversity, but diversity should be transparent to unity.

36. On the other hand, cooperation and enrichment are significantly furthered when our various diaconal ministries are informed about and can recognize each other. Some Lutheran-Anglican agreements have provided for a mutual canonical recognition of ordained deacons (e.g., the Northern European *Porvoo Common Statement*). Mutual acquaintance and recognition in diaconal ministries, however, should reach further than just canonical measures. Possibilities of common learning and work need to be explored. Deacons and diaconal ministers from our traditions already meet in national and international organizations devoted to diaconal ministry. A deeper knowledge of one another would further mutual support and encouragement, which might be especially important in places where only a few deacons from each tradition are present. If communion is truly a growing together into a common life, then a lively sense of a common diaconal mission, carried out in many ways, is an important aspect of communion.

B. VARIOUS FORMS OF DIACONAL MINISTRY

37. Many of the diaconal ministries within our churches arose in response to specific needs in our societies. The dominant factors in the diversity of diaconal ministries have been the various needs which they have sought to meet and the historical contexts in which they arose and which shaped their character. Diaconal ministries are thus often expressions of particular historical and cultural realities.

38. While a clearer sense of the nature of the diaconate and diaconal ministry is needed, the flexibility and spontaneity that have characterized the development of many diaconal ministries over the last two hundred years should not be lost. While respecting cultural and historical diversity, our churches must also be ready to reflect critically on these forms. Some may have outlived their usefulness. Some may need to be reformed. The churches need to be open to the development of new forms of diaconal ministry, as needs and the moment require.

39. Certain forms of diversity need here to be especially noted in order to avoid

misunderstanding, to further mutual recognition, and to avoid distortions.

40. The most obvious diversity within and between our churches is between the diaconate as an ordained ministry and forms of diaconal ministry commissioned, set apart, or consecrated in other ways. The issues related to ordination are discussed below in section IV.

41. An important variable in diaconal ministry is the form of commitment called for by different ministries. A significant number of such ministries call for extended or life-long commitment. Some call for commitment to life in community, in various forms and for various lengths of time. The form of commitment tends to reflect the interrelation of ministry and personal identity. When diaconal ministry involves personal identity and is not just a task (cf. paragraph 25), long-term or open-ended commitment is particularly appropriate.

42. Different forms of diaconal ministry relate in different ways to the leadership and decision-making structures of the churches. Some were initially mandated by the central structures of church authority and are immediately responsible to those structures. Others arose as grassroots initiatives responsible to the church in more indirect ways.

43. A relative freedom from the central decision making structures of the churches has permitted some diaconal ministries to be spaces where excluded groups (e.g., women) have been able to shape and exercise their own ministries. These ministries have addressed concerns sometimes ignored by the church leadership.

44. The danger should be recognized that such ministries can become places where the ministries of women and other marginalized groups can be isolated and limited. Diaconal ministries with a specific focus should not be shaped in ways that reinforce oppressive stereotypes. Just as the entire life of the church, including its leadership structures, is being opened to all within it, so diaconal ministries which may previously have been identified with certain groups should be opened to all. For example, forms of diaconal ministry that have traditionally been seen as appropriate only for women can be seen as possible for men also.

45. Some forms of diaconal ministry have been defined by specific tasks, e.g., work with youth or the sick. Others have been defined by a community, fellowship, or association which has then taken up a variety of tasks, e.g., some orders of deaconesses. There is no need to choose between these two forms of diaconal self-definition. The church at various times needs both forms of ministry, which to a degree relate to different forms or ways of life to which individuals feel themselves called.

46. Different forms of diaconal ministry call for different sorts of preparation and engagement. Some depend extensively on previous experience in church and world, and do not require a special preparation of the sort now associated with seminaries and university theological faculties. Others employ a more "professional" model of education and certification. Again, no universal judgement should be made that any particular model is the only one appropriate. Rather, careful consideration needs to be given to what forms of preparation and examination a particular task and role calls for.

C. COMMON PRINCIPLES

47. Within the diversity of present forms of diaconal ministries, some common principles can be recognized, applicable to both lay and ordained diaconal ministries. These common principles form a background against which we can recognize the various diaconal ministries in our midst. By identifying theological concerns related to various forms of diaconal ministry, they also can provide guidance in thinking about and shaping such ministries. Taken together, these principles do not provide an exhaustive description or definition of the diaconate or diaconal ministry. The variety that has typified and should typify diaconal ministries rules out such an exhaustive definition. That the relation of some ministries to what is here and elsewhere described as diaconal ministry is sometimes unclear is in itself not a problem.

48. A general description of diaconal ministers can be given: **Diaconal ministers are called to be agents of the church in interpreting and meeting needs, hopes, and concerns within church and society.**

49. As agents of the church, deacons and diaconal ministers do not pursue a simply self-initiated and self-accountable ministry. While traditionally deacons were understood to be agents of the bishop, diaconal ministers today are often agents of congregations or other church bodies. In all cases, however, diaconal ministry is carried out in the name of the church.

50. Such a relation of agency implies a relation of accountability. Accountability is a many-sided relation. Diaconal ministers must account to the church for their ministries. The church, however, is also accountable for providing adequate support and preparation for diaconal ministries carried out in its name. Accountability should not become a relation of subservience which would hinder the spontaneity and flexibility which diaconal ministry often needs, and which would rule out the possibility of diaconal ministry expressing a prophetic critique of the church. Diaconal ministers can also at times model special forms of Christian life. Such critique and modelling must be for the sake of the wider

church, however, if diaconal ministry is to be understood as ministry that represents the church.

51. Diaconal ministry typically not only seeks to mediate the service of the church to specific needs, but also to interpret those needs to the church. The "go-between" role of diaconal ministry thus operates in both directions: from church to the needs, hopes, and concerns of persons in and beyond the church; and from those needs, hopes, and concerns to the church.

52. Precisely as ministry that represents and is an agency of the church, diaconal ministries are not only ministries of service (*diakonia*), but also of witness (*martyria*) and worship (*leitourgia*). If diaconal ministry is carried out in the name of the church, then it is only rightly carried out in the name of Christ and to the praise and glory of God. The revival of a specific liturgical role for deacons in some churches points to the witness and worship which occur throughout their ministry.

53. The interrelation of service, witness, and praise may vary widely in different forms of diaconal ministry. Though the present understanding of the meaning of *diakonia* in the New Testament is undergoing change, service typically forms the central emphasis of diaconal ministry. This service is liturgically focused and brought to the recognition of the church in the various roles of the deacon in the eucharist.

54. The church's service, however, must not cease to be a witness to the Christ who is among us as one who serves. Diaconal ministry is a form of discipleship and should be recognizable as such. The witnessing aspect of diaconal ministry was, and in some of our churches still is, symbolized by the deacon reading the gospel within the church's liturgy. This role symbolizes the witness of diaconal ministry, which nevertheless finds its centre in the witnessing character of its service.

55. Like all aspects of the Christian life, diaconal ministry is to the praise and glory of God. This aspect of diaconal ministry should be particularly evident in the joy and hope which should shine through diaconal ministry, even in situations which would seem to induce despair. Again, this doxological aspect of diaconal ministry is symbolized by specific roles deacons and diaconal ministers can and have played in the liturgy of the church, e.g., proclaiming the resurrection in the Easter Vigil through the *Exultet*. The *leitourgia* of diaconal ministry also includes lament and intercession. The deacon thus traditionally, and today again in some churches, gathers and leads the congregation's intercessory prayers. Again, however, these liturgical roles symbolize the true centre of the *leitourgia* of the dia-

conal ministers, which is to be found in their daily ministry.

56. As a specific and focal form of a task to which all Christians are called, the service of one's neighbour, diaconal ministry should foster and bring to wider recognition the ministry of others, rather than making their ministries redundant or superfluous. The diaconal minister should lead and inspire the wider church in its service. Here the interpretive role of diaconal ministry plays a special role. Diaconal ministries will have their own specific tasks which are their own responsibility. As a ministry of the whole church, however, this ministry should have a multiplying effect, leading others to their own specific tasks of service.

57. As a ministry of the church, diaconal ministry is not the ministry of isolated individuals, but should reflect the personal, collegial, and communal aspects of the church's ministries (cf. BEM, Ministry, 26). One possible form of such collegiality is the mutual support and communal life of the various communities, associations, and mother houses that have proved important to the vitality of many diaconal ministries. These forms of life have provided important opportunities for mutual support in often invisible and thankless work, have called forth special gifts, and have provided examples of committed community for other ministries and the church.

IV AN ORDAINED DIACONATE

A. THE QUESTION OF AN ORDAINED DIACONATE

58. Previous sections have laid the foundation for a more focused consideration at this point of a renewed or re-established diaconate within the ordained ministry. Unless otherwise specified, in this section the terms "deacon" and "diaconate" refer to an ordained ministry.

59. It is important to reiterate here that questions surrounding the renewal or the re-establishment of the diaconate as an ordained ministry in the contemporary church do not constitute a church-dividing problem for Lutherans and Anglicans. The way in which Lutherans and Anglicans today hear the questions surrounding the diaconate is coloured by their differing histories. These questions are, nevertheless, addressed in the context of remarkable ecumenical agreements already existing between the two traditions as they move toward the explicit goal of full communion. Such agreements, on the one hand, fully document mutual concern for the historical ordering of ministry as a sign of apostolicity, and, on the other hand, find in such a common grounding the basis for a certain freedom to address critically the issues around the effective ordering of ministries in the contemporary church as it seeks to serve and proclaim the gospel.

60. Contemporary discussion about a renewed or re-established diaconate is, of course, by no means limited to our two traditions. Wider catholic tradition, contemporary scholarship, and ecumenical conversation place before Lutherans and Anglicans questions concerning a renewed diaconate. Three sources in particular inform present reflections: (1) the insights of BEM on the diaconate (Ministry, 31); (2) the historical-philological corrective to earlier understandings of the *diakon-* words provided by John Collins' *Diakonia* (see above, 3f); and (3) the long tradition that finds the paradigm for the entire ministry of the deacon in the deacon's liturgical role in and about the paschal proclamation (*Exultet*) at the Great Vigil of the Resurrection.

61. From these sources there emerges a renewed definition of diaconate for our time that understands deacons to be not merely an inferior order of ministers exercising lowly service, but agents ordained to assist the community's presider (bishop/presbyter), both in the proclamation and celebration of Word and sacrament, as well as in the coordinating of the community's *diakonia* in Christ. As in the paschal liturgy, the deacon not only proclaims "the light of Christ", inviting the people to join in praise and thanksgiving, but also leads the community into ministry with "the light of Christ". While remaining faithful, then, to ancient theological understandings and structures of ministry, such a definition, in fact, pro-

vides challenges as well as opportunities for both the Lutheran and Anglican traditions as they have historically addressed and carried out the diaconate and diaconal ministries.

62. In both traditions the distinctive role of the diaconate within the ordained ministry has been absorbed into the presbyterate on the basis of developments that obtained in the western church from the middle ages to the eve of the 16th-century reformations. The Anglican tradition, for instance, preserved the form of the diaconate, while the Lutheran tradition for the most part did not. Furthermore, where Anglicans retained some semblance of a liturgical role for the diaconate in Word and sacrament, pastorally they treated the order essentially as an apprenticeship for presbyterate. Among Lutherans the diaconate as an order within the one ministry of Word and sacrament did not survive. Rather, a revival of lay diaconal ministries, carrying out socio-caritative-educational work without a liturgical base in the church, has characterized most Lutheran practice since the nineteenth century.

B. THE MEANING OF ORDINATION IN RELATION TO THE DIACONATE

63. In the contemporary situation the meaning of ordination in relation to the diaconate is an issue of central importance.

64. For many (but not all) Lutheran churches, the ordination of deacons would be a new development requiring a convincing rationale. Specifically, such a proposal would require a broader understanding of the traditional Lutheran doctrine of ordained ministry. For many (but not all) Anglican churches, whether they are for or against the renewal of the diaconate, retention of it in "form only" has grown increasingly problematic in the contemporary situation. Thus it becomes necessary to reconsider the language used in relation to ordination itself. In the case of a renewed or re-established diaconate, ordination (1) is into both an activity and an identity; (2) calls for some kind of open-ended or life-long commitment; (3) includes recognition as being within the one ordained ministry of Word and sacrament; and (4) entails a symbolic as well as a practical relationship to the whole community that provides for the public exercise of this ministry as well as for its accountability. Such a way of talking about the diaconate has the advantage of going through and beyond the old dichotomies of "functional" versus "ontological" by giving the diaconate a specifically ecclesiastical location and expression (see above, 25).

65. In this regard, appropriate reference can be made to those significant statements in BEM (Ministry, 29-31) that deal with the unity as well as particular

characteristics of ordained ministry, whether of the bishop, presbyter, or deacon. Here within the one ordained ministry may be found a threefold expression on the basis of the principle "distinction without separation". Yet with respect to a renewed or re-established diaconate, it is precisely here that challenging issues arise for Lutherans and Anglicans. In addition, both traditions also face questions about the relation of this order to (1) the presbyterate, (2) those already exercising non-ordained diaconal ministries, and (3) all the baptized (*laos*). In each, there exist both problems and opportunities.

66. Thus, for instance, Lutheran churches without an ordained diaconate are challenged to consider whether such a diaconate as has been described above (including a liturgical grounding in the ministry of Word and sacrament) would be of value in their service of the gospel and, if so, whether a diaconal ministry more reflective of the practice of the wider church and Christian tradition could appear as a legitimate development for Lutherans.

67. Anglican churches are challenged to restore to the diaconate (as defined above) its character as a lifelong and distinct form of ordained ministry, including with its liturgical function a pastoral focus on *caritas* and *justitia* in church and society. Such a restoration would imply both a reconsideration of the transitional diaconate and the possibility of direct ordination to the priesthood of persons discerned to have presbyteral vocations without their "passing through" the diaconate. The possibility of such direct ordination is not excluded on historical or theological grounds.

68. In both traditions, the presbyters may perceive a renewed diaconate as a threat to their own identity and role. This will be especially so where the presbyteral office is seen as the embodiment of all ordained ministry. If, however, presbyters can welcome deacons as partners-in-ministry, both liturgically and within the church's mission, then they may themselves be freed to exercise a more focused ministry, bearing responsibility for the life of the community in Word and sacrament. In this way, too, the diaconate can stand as a witness against the perennial threat of clericalism, an ecclesiastical distortion rooted in exclusivist attitudes and practices. Deacons are called by the very nature of their order to stand as a witness to presbyters and bishops that the authority of all ordained ministry is for service alone.

69. The re-establishment of a diaconate within the ordained ministry need not appear as a denigration of the work of diaconal orders, agencies, or persons who exercise ministries to, for, and with the oppressed, the marginalized, or the poor. It would be surprising, rather, if deacons did not urgently strive to link these dia-

conal groups with the life of the congregations they serve in order more effectively to carry out together the church's mission. It might also occur through such contact that diaconal orders, agencies, or persons would, over time, come to a new appreciation of the connection between the worship that is at the heart of Christian communities and their own life of service. In turn, they might seek creative ways to connect this service with the liturgical life of congregations.

70. In our own day, one of the chief arguments against a renewed diaconate is often a concern that various ministries in worship now exercised by lay persons as the result of movements of liturgical renewal might be re-absorbed into a clerical order. It is asked whether a re-established diaconate will more generally usurp lay ministries. These concerns have arisen to the extent that laity have ceased in our age to be the passive recipients or consumers of ministry at the hands of the ordained and become active participants in the church's mission. If, however, deacons are understood as the very persons who (1) "represent to the church (*laos*) its calling as servant," and (2) "exemplify the interdependence of worship and service" (BEM, Ministry, 31), then we can address the concern that what deacons do is the same as what Christians in general could or should do. In fact, deacons have no special powers or activities exclusively reserved to them. What is, however, distinctive is their call to be publicly accountable servants of the church who have a charge to model, encourage, and coordinate *diakonia*. This is the particular call or vocation of the deacon that is not shared by all Christians.

71. There are also professional implications in regard to a renewed or re-established diaconate in the contemporary church. Questions and concerns here, in fact, are often voiced prior to any sustained theological or ecclesiological reflection on the diaconate. At this point it must simply be indicated that a great diversity of approach is possible in dealing with a renewed diaconate according to ecclesiastical circumstances and missionary need. Thus a renewed diaconate could be exercised as full-time or part-time, stipendiary or non-stipendiary. When paid, remuneration could be from either church or non-church sources. Whatever the case, these questions are secondary to theological, liturgical, and ecclesiastical considerations.

72. Finally, both traditions would be challenged to ensure that appropriate forms of education and formation for this ministry are developed within their various agencies of theological education. In such planning and development it will be important to consider what aspects of diaconal formation and education will best be done in conjunction and community with those preparing for presbyteral or lay ministries and which parts solely with candidates for the diaconate. Given the nature of ordained diaconal ministry, the bulk of the preparation probably will

need to occur in the former manner. In any case it will be important that formation in *diakonia*, as well as in the ability to form others in *diakonia* occurs.

C. THE RENEWAL OF THE DIACONATE AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR UNITY AND JOINT MISSION

73. The renewal of the church's diaconate at this time presents a unique opportunity for deepened unity and joint endeavour in the life and mission of the Anglican and Lutheran, as well as other churches.

74. The process of ecumenical dialogue and theological reflection is one which itself helps to build and deepen *koinonia* among Christians of different communions. Discussions about the place and practice of *diakonia* in baptized and ordered Christian life can positively influence the future of the church and how the church is seen and manifested in the world. Not only do such discussions help to further the work on ministry begun in BEM, they also contribute to an overarching ecclesiological vision which can strengthen the bonds among Christians of the Lutheran, Anglican, and other traditions.

75. The diaconate offers a theme for ecumenical exploration which can result in a more effective co-ordination of efforts to renew mission and liturgy both within and among these differing traditions. It is an exploration which pushes churches to rethink existing assumptions, and to reach greater clarity in their theological and functional understanding of the offices of presbyter and bishop. Such clarity can only help to enhance liturgical practices and the way in which they shape the intentional daily ministry of all baptized Christians.

76. The contribution of the diaconal movement initiated in the 19th century by the churches in Germany and spread throughout the Lutheran communion has set an inspiring example of diaconal works already being performed by many Christians, both individually and corporately, both unofficially and in the name of the church. Raising the possibility of an ordained diaconate, visibly incorporated into ordered ministry and eucharistic liturgy, challenges the church in every location both to take greater ownership of *diakonia* as a sign of apostolicity and to encourage the whole people of God to understand their daily life as an arena for Christian service. Likewise, the emergence of a distinctive, lifelong ordained diaconate in the Anglican Church invites all Christians better to integrate worship and service in their daily lives. A revitalized diaconate can be a means for equipping the laity to become serving leaders in their various callings and for mobilizing them to become effective agents for the transformation of worldly structures and institutions.

77. The church's *diakonia* is characterized by practical expressions of God's redeeming love in concrete acts of justice, reconciliation, and healing. A renewed diaconate can effectively strengthen these acts with the church's authority and blessing by linking them with the eucharistic meal. Such a renewal opens the door for shared endeavours which can be undertaken locally and by the wider church. Indeed, such associations of diaconal communities as the *Kaiserswerthe Diakonieverband*, *Diakonia*, the World Federation of Diaconal Associations and Diaconal Communities and its regional bodies, represent ecumenical and collaborative possibilities which should be further explored.

78. Regardless of differing practices and assumptions, deacons and diaconal ministers of all traditions are closely bound together by their common awareness of exercising servanthood within and beyond the church, wherever hope and suffering present opportunities for justice and healing. There is a powerful potential for further initiatives along these lines:

- Anglican and Lutheran parishes and congregations sharing the ministry of deacons and diaconal ministers of either tradition, borrowing or seconding deacons and diaconal ministers in areas where one or the other tradition is sparsely represented;
- joint presentations at synodical or convention gatherings on the "needs, hopes and concerns of the world" as perceived and experienced by deacons and diaconal ministers;
- invitations to deacons or diaconal ministers of one tradition to participate in the liturgies of the other, particularly on major occasions;
- opening up diaconal associations of a "third order" type to women and men of both traditions exercising diaconal ministry;
- initiating joint pilot or demonstration projects using pooled resources from Anglican and Lutheran jurisdictions to encourage experimentation and learning with regard to:
  - new patterns of stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministry;
  - ways of discerning diaconal as distinct from presbyteral vocations and encouraging churches, where ready, to ordain accordingly;
  - theological and ministerial training and formation;
  - encouraging and supporting churches which may not at this time have a diaconate to initiate a diaconate as appropriate to their ministry needs.

V CONCLUSION

79. This study has been conducted under the theme of the diaconate and diaconal ministries as an ecumenical opportunity for the contemporary life and mission of the churches. If diaconal ministry is to be pursued in the name of the wider church, it must be ecumenically open. In a situation of division, most diaconal ministries will be rooted in and accountable to a particular church body. Nevertheless, the mandate of diaconal ministry is laid upon the entire church of Jesus Christ. The call to witness to the unity we have been given and to contribute to the unity we seek is also addressed to deacons and diaconal ministers. Precisely because diaconal ministry is not burdened with the problems of validity and canonical recognition which hinder our visible unity in the exercise of presbyteral and episcopal ministry, we are called all the more to take up the possibilities before us for common diaconal ministry. The question and opportunity thus become clear: could forms of joint, common, or united diaconal ministry precede and clear the way for a joint, common, or united presbyterate or episcopacy? Joint oversight of diaconal ministries could provide a focus for movement into a joint exercise of *episcopé*. Our churches and our diaconal ministers need to be imaginative in shaping diaconal ministries ecumenically.

Appendix 1

ANGLICAN-LUTHERAN CONSULTATION ON THE DIACONATE

Emmaus Centre, West Wickham, Kent, England
24-30 April 1995

Anglicans

- The Rt Revd David Tustin - Co Chair
The Revd Canon Dr Sebastian Bakare
- The Very Revd William Petersen
Deacon Ormonde Plater
- The Rt Revd Barry Rogerson
The Revd Sr Teresa (J White), CSA
- Deacon Maylanne Whittall
- The Revd Dr Donald Anderson - Co Secretary

Lutherans

- Prof Dr Ambrose Moyo - Co Chair
The Revd Dr Risto Ahonen
- The Revd Dr Walter Bouman
- Prof Dr. Sven-Erik Brodd
- The Rev. Dr Norma Cook Everist
Prof Dr Carter Lindberg
Schwester Anna-Maria aus der Wiesche
- The Revd Dr Eugene Brand - Co Secretary

Consultants

Prof Dr Michael Root
The Revd Dr Dieterich Pfisterer [unable to attend]

Orthodox Participant

Ms Kyriaki FitzGerald

Roman Catholic Participant

The Revd Mgr William Steele

Administrative Secretary

Ms Christine Codner

- *Also attended the Anglican-Lutheran International Commission Meeting held in Hanover, Germany, October 1995*

Appendix 2

THE ANGLICAN-LUTHERAN INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION

Hanover, Germany
5-11 October 1995

Anglicans

The Rt Revd David Tustin - *Co Chair*
The Revd Dr John Flynn [unable to attend]
The Rt Revd Charles Mwaigoga
The Rt Revd Sumio Takatsu
The Very Revd William Petersen
The Rt Revd Stephen Sykes [unable to attend]
The Revd Dr Donald Anderson - *Co Secretary*

Lutherans

The Revd Dr Ambrose Moyo - *Co Chair*
The Revd Dr Walter Bouman
The Rt Revd Dr Tore Furberg
The Revd Dr Christa Grengel
The Revd Dr B C Paul
The Revd Dr Karlheinz Schmale
The Revd Dr Eugene Brand - *Co Secretary*

Consultants

Prof Dr Sven-Erik Brodd
The Revd Dr Norma Cook Everist
The Rt Revd Barry Rogerson
Deacon Maylanne Whittall

Administrative Secretaries

Ms Christine Codner
Ms Irmhild Reichen-Young

Appendix 3

FACTUAL SURVEY

We extend an open invitation to church leaders and the chairpersons of diaconal associations and communities throughout the world to assist this project by reporting briefly on the following points:

- What publicly accredited forms of diaconal ministry exist in your church?
- What kinds of diaconal work is done by other persons in the name of your church?
- Since when has this been so? (key dates in development)
- What numbers of women and men are engaged in these ministries?
- Are they full-time or part-time; paid from church/other sources or unpaid?
- Are these ministries interrelated with other church structures?
- What are the educational requirements and training provisions for these ministries?
- How are they commissioned? e.g. ordination, licensing, commissioning, consecration, etc.

Any contributions to this enquiry will help to throw further light on the extent and variety of diaconal ministry of our churches' life, and may be sent to:

Anglican-Lutheran International Commission
c/o Lutheran World Federation
P.O. Box 2100
1211 Geneva 2
Switzerland

or

Anglican-Lutheran International Commission
c/o The Anglican Consultative Council
Partnership House
157 Waterloo Road
London SE1 8UT
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